

Rule Together

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Summary: 4C of Fated. Read the others first! Hiccup moves to Caledonia, and misses Berk more than he thought he would.

## 1. Chapter 1

Rule Together

\_By Uniasus\_

**\*\*4C in Fated\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Too nervous to sit around the castle, Hiccup and Merida had gone for a flight on Toothless. They released the tension of waiting for their parents' decision by flying below the tree tops and dodging tree trunks.<p>

It helped, a little bit, but upon their return to Merida's home and seeing the deliberations were over, much too early for the decision to simply pause until the next day, all that tension and painful hope of their future union came pouring back into their bodies.

Stoick was the one to step forward and announce the decision.

"Son, I'm gonna miss you."

Merida jump up and down with a happy cheer and then went to give her future father-in-law a hug. Hiccup just stood there, letting the idea sink in. He was going to marry Merida. He was going to move to Caledonia.

He was going to marry Merida.

The bubble of happiness in his chest was hard to quench, and indeed

he was sure he showed it on his face, but he managed to be mature when he approached Fergus and Elinor. "Thank you for allowing me to marry Merida. I promise to take care of her."

"I know you will," Elinor answered, but it was barely heard by Fergus wrapping his arms around Hiccup and lifting him into the air and booming "Welcome to the family!"

#####

For once, leaving Caledonia didn't come with feelings of loss. Come a few months, he would be returning for his wedding to Merida. They were getting married!

Upon landing on Berk however, the same feeling that he had felt for at least a year, of a reluctant return until he could leave again, settled in his stomach. Usually the feeling faded after the first day. He loved Caledonia, loved Merida, but Berk was home and where he felt he was the most useful. In two years, he had become a community pillar. Caledonia was a nice break.

Only now, back on Berk and knowing soon he could no longer call the small island home, did he wish things were the other way around. That Merida was coming here instead of him going there.

Berk, with it's dragons and cold and endless problems, was part of his blood. He was going to do a lot of sketches to take back with him.

#####

It was, oh, maybe an hour after Stoick announced the alliance between the two communities before Astird and Stormfly came along side Hiccup and Toothless in the air. Dragons weren't hovering creatures, but still Hiccup was trying to find the best angle of Berk to save in his mind and draw later.

"You're getting married!"

"Yup."

And something in the way he said it had her eyes narrow and the Nadder's spikes rise.

"Why do you sound happy?"

"Because I love Merida."

"You've only seen her for a few days during the negotiations!"

Oh, right...

Hiccup turned from looking at the houses below to pay detailed attention to Astrid's face. Hair blown back by the wind, hands white tight on the saddle, and large eyes that held surprise, confusion. And betrayal.

"Just a few days with her, and you're leaving me. What does she have that I don't?" But Hiccup never got a chance to answer because Astrid took Stormfly into a dive and Hiccup didn't

follow.

#####

Hiccup had always know his wedding gift to Merida would be a dragon. The problem was figuring out which one. Originally he had figured a Deadly Nadder would be a good choice; Merida and Astrid were somewhat similar in build so physically a Nadder would be a good match. He had tried to ask Astrid to help him choose one, she slammed the door in his face, and dragons must have their own gossip mill because half of the spiky dragons wouldn't come near him.

He settled on a Monstrous Nightmare instead.

Lucky wasn't fully grown yet. Fishlegs estimated another five years or so, but they were still learning about the dragon life cycle. Yet it was obvious that the young dragon would not quite reach the size of the other Nightmares. Malnutrition as a hatching, smaller parents, who knew, but Hiccup figured Lucky was a good size for Merida. Very affectionate too, and didn't need a head wrestle to clam her down. That seemed to be a male Nightmare thing.

"Are you sure you made a good choice?" Fishlegs asked while they washed their dragons. "I mean, don't you think a Gronkle would make a better choice for someone who has a limited experience with dragons? Sure, Meatlug's gentler than most, but as a breed they're the calmest."

"No, Merida will have no problem with Lucky. I think she'd find Gronkles too tame for her."

"Just what type of girl is she?"

"The one who rock climbs up a waterfall with a bow on her back."

#####

Stoick had insisted that Hiccup ride the boats back to Caledonia when they left for the wedding. No flying ahead and getting there days early, no delaying departure to get there the same time as the ships. No, he was going to say goodbye to his son soon and wanted all the time he could get with him.

Hiccup was touched by the need to pack what they could in the three week journey. Toothless would laze on the deck, Thornado swim through the water beside the boat, other dragons of other vikings alternating between decks and sky, and the two of them would just sit and talk. Sometimes about shared memories, or Stoick would talk about his wife and Hiccup would share tales of Merida. There was also a rather lot of chiefting talk. Hiccup hadn't been due to take over for years yet, had no reason to learn anything specifically from his dad, but now that he would be a king instead of a chief Hiccup was freaked out of his mind.

"The title may be different, but the job's the same," Gobber told him and so Hiccup had gone to Stoick to share everything he could. It would do to be well prepared, and he was surprised at how chiefting worked. Just like he manipulated metal and leather, Stoick manipulated people.

"I don't know if I can do this," Hiccup admitted, not for the first time, as the shore of Caledonia appeared on the horizon.

"Well I know you can," Stoick answered, also not for the first time. "You're my son, your mother's son, and the viking who changed the course of Berk's history. Recon the Gods want you to do the same thing here."

Change Caledonia? But it was perfect just the way it was.

He tried not to think about the fact that it never snowed here hard enough to bury you.

#####

There were representatives from all four clans, as well as neighboring kingdoms, and five ships of vikings at the wedding. But Hiccup didn't have the time to take in the mixing of cultures, the similarities and differences between Norse men and Celtic men. He was too busy watching Merdia the entire time, hand sneaking out underneath the table to touch her wedding gown to prove that yes this was real.

She kept doing the same thing, so Hiccup knew she was just as dazed as he was.

They said their vows, consummated their marriage, and yet it still didn't feel real. Not even when they were given their own suite of rooms, or flew through the sky on their dragons (Merida and Lucky were bonded fast). There was nothing different, aside from the addition to Lucky, from most of his visits to Caledonia.

And then came the day when the vikings of Berk left.

Hiccup stood on the edge of the dock, hand on Toothless's back, as he watched the sails fade away. There went his friends, his family, back to Berk and home. A journey he would never take again.

He never thought he'd miss that rocky island.

Merida came up behind him, wrapping her arms around his waist and planting a kiss just before his ear.

"You okay?"

"I miss them already."

"I understand. I would feel the same way if I was watching my parents sail away from Berk."

"I didn't think I would miss Berk at all."

"Why wouldn't you, it's your home."

"Was. Was my home. Now, it's with you."

He leaned back against her and together they sunk to the wooden planks. Toothless curled around them, Lucky around him.

Hiccup knew the feeling would get better with time, but for tonight, and probably the next three months, it would be hard. It was nice to know he had support here. He closed his eyes, slipping into a nap as Merida played with his hair.

#####

Despite being married, Merida still had to attend princess lessons. And sometimes, Hiccup attended them too. While a prince didn't need to memorize poetry (though he found the poems Caledonia had fascinating), he did need to know how to speak properly, how to host, and the history of the clans. Because, as Elinor was always pointing out, the people of Caledonia were his people now and people he would be ruling in the future.

It still blindsided him sometimes. That he was now a prince. His life (aside from it now being in a stone castle instead of a wooden hut) wasn't that different. Hiccup still went for rides on Toothless, still went exploring with Merida, coupled on top of the Firefall. No one at the castle treated him any differently than they had for the past two years. And while the lessons were the result of him now being a prince, he just saw them as interesting. More things to learn and use for the future.

But sometimes, when he and Merida had ventured to the edge of the kingdom, to where people weren't as familiar with them and thus did not treat them as neighbors, he was reminded that some day, and some day soon, they would be his responsibility.

The idea had freaked him out a bit on Berk, knowing that he was the next chief, but at least he knew Berk. Knew it's people and it's land. He thought he had learned a lot about Caledonia from all his visits, but his lessons were showing him that wasn't the case. There was still so much he didn't know.

He was supposed to rule, as king (which sounded a lot more imposing than village chief), over a people and a land he knew very little about. Hiccup would be lying if he said that did not scare him.

Merida always seemed to know when the thought would strike him and she'd calm him with a kiss to his cheek. "Don't forget, we'll rule together. What you don't know, I do, and what I don't know, you do. The wisps said we're fated to be with each other, remember? That includes ruling this land."

He always felt better after that, until the thought entered his mind again days later.

#####

What surprised Hiccup was the lack of an Astrid counterpart. That is, Astrid was upset at his marriage but no one here seemed to be upset with Merida's marriage to him.

At least, until members of Clan Macintosh arrived for a visit.

"Why does he keep staring at me?" Hiccup leaned over to whisper in Merida's ear during dinner, subtly gesturing to a young man with long black hair with a fork.

She looked at the Celtic man, smiled at him, and he turned away, slightly embarrassed.

"That's Carrdoc Macintosh. One of the suitors my mum invited. A bit melodramatic, and I think my hair has less tangles. He's nice enough. The first to agree with me about choosing ourselves who we marry."

"So not a bad guy."

"Not at all."

Still, Hiccup didn't like the way he looked at him.

#####

Merida was doing something or other with Elinor, Hiccup wasn't sure what, but he had taken the time to give Toothless a bath at the river.

He was completely not expecting the arrow that flew towards his head.

Toothless reflected it with a wing and bounded into the trees. He pulled out Carrdoc, the other man kicking and screaming, and then proceeded to dunk his head in the river and hold it there. Hiccup knew the Night Fury would have no qualms about drowning the Celt and so rushed over. "Toothless! Drop him!"

The dragon waited an extra second before obeying, but opened his jaws. Carrdoc's head broke the surface, sputtering and gasping for breath. Hiccup pulled him onto the river bank, Toothless following behind him with bared teeth.

Once Carrdoc had cleared his lungs of water, he looked up at Hiccup, and to the viking's surprise, started to whine.

"It's not fair! I try so hard, and it never helps me get what I want!" He reached into the the quiver on his back for an arrow and then bite the shaft in two. "I mean, I'm obviously better than you, you can't even defend yourself, you have to have your dragon do it instead..."

In a flash, he flipped himself onto his back and threw a dagger at Toothless's throat. Toothless melted the weapon before it reached him, igniting both men's clothes. With a yelp, Hiccup jumped into the river. Carrdoc said something that sounded like 'as I am a failure, let me die in peace.'

Hiccup threw a handful of water at the young Macintosh. Getting the hint, Toothless splashed him good. Carrdoc, now wet and slightly pink, pounded his head into the ground.

Hiccup understood dragons a lot better than humans, he never realized that more until he moved to Caledonia and found that the villagers confused him more than the Berk variety and he missed the simplicity of dragons, but he couldn't help but take a guess at the reason for Carrdoc's actions.

"You like Merida, don't you?" he asked, sitting down in the mud besides the Celt.

Carrdoc turned his head to look at him and gave a dramatic nod.

"She's never really noticed you, hasn't she?"

Carrdoc shook his head.

As pleased as Hiccup was to hear that, it meant she had only ever had eyes for him, it wasn't something to tell Carrdoc.

"Sorry," he said instead.

Carrdoc deflated.

"If it makes you feel better, Merida didn't marry me because I have a dragon."

"So it's me as a person that she doesn't like?"

"Um...yes, probably."

He bit two arrow shafts this time.

"Hey!" Hiccup said, pulling the wood away to prevent Carrdoc from chewing on the ends. "You'll get splinters in your mouth."

"I don't care! My life is over!"

"That's not true. I'm sure there are lots of ladies who would love to be with you. Merida mentioned you were a favorite among the village girls when you first came to be her suitor."

"Really?"

Actually, Hiccup had no idea. He and Merida had never really spoken about her past suitors from other clans. Just like they had never really talked about Astrid.

"Yes. I'm sure you can find someone among them."

"If I don't, I'll be coming back for Merida."

"Okay. But I won't let her go." And really, Hiccup could tell that something about their interaction, but he didn't know what, had convinced the Celt that Merida was in good hands. Carrdoc might never not be jealous to some extent, but he could move on.

#####

"And what did you do today?" his wife asked as they laid in bed that night.

"Defended my claim to you."

"Do I want to know?"

"Probably not."

She snuggled into his side. "My big brave warrior."

"You know it," he said, kissing the top of her head.

\* \* \*

><p>And thus you have read the first option in the C universe of Fated, Hiccup moving to Caledonia. Not much culture here in this one, but I have some ideas to play with the next one. If you want a next one. I'll be expanding the different branches of the Fated universe (A, B, or C) depending on your outpouring of viewscomments/kudos/how ever you show your love. And while I did have ideas, I won't turn away any one of you may suggest. No promise of using it, but I'll read it.

## 2. Dragon Speak

Dragon Speak

By Uniasus

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN\*\*: When I counted up points, option C was in the lead! By one point. B pulled ahead while I was writing this, though. Regardless, here the next option by popular demand (at the time!) Enjoy this installment of Fated.

\* \* \*

><p>The first harvest after the marriage was the first sign of the Earth Goddess's displeasure. Of course, that was just the suspicious folk talking. Merida was a lot more practical.<p>

"It's as if something has eaten all the wheat." She pulled the head of a stalk down to eye level. The stem wasn't damaged, there was no claw marks or teeth impressions from some creature, simply the grains were just gone, the wheat looked just like really tall grass. Hiccup would have suggested the wind had blown them off, if it weren't for the fact that there wasn't any grain on the ground, there hadn't been a gently breeze in three days, and he had seen crops survive fierce thunderstorms. Snowstorms too, but well, Berk was a special place. Caledonia crops probably couldn't.

"It's magic!" The Celt who farmed the land insisted. His gaze flitted to Hiccup, the obvious culprit since he was Caledonia's only new feature, but apparently all the good Hiccup had brought stilled his tongue. It was thanks to Hiccup and Toothless, hooked up to a plow, that many farmers had larger plots this year. And with the promise of more dragon help next planting session, not to mention the water mill Hiccup had invented, his good karma just balanced out the bad omen this field contained.

"It's an animal." Merida insisted again and her subject went quiet. One does not argue with a pregnant princess.



Hiccup had to agree, as he sketched the odd looking wheat, the lack of grains making each stem look unbalanced. But only because he couldn't think of any other possible reason.

#####

When harvest actually came, Hiccup and Toothless led the first ever Caledonia trading mission to Berk. Merida, to her great displeasure, had been refused permission to travel by not only her parents, but her husband too.

"How is me flying Lucky around pregnant any different than taking a three week boat trip?"

"It's three weeks one way!" Elinor explained. "What if something happens getting to Berk? Or on the way back? There are no healers going."

"So send one! You're the queen, aren't you?"

"You're being selfish again."

That shut Merida up. That night, in bed, she had tried to convince Hiccup to support her, but he sided with her parents.

"You are sick most mornings, and you want to spend over a month on a boat, braving waves and storms?"

"I'll ride Lucky all day?"

"Even now you have trouble sitting in the saddle for long periods. I can't imagine you flying for long getting there. And even less when we're coming back. You'll be much bigger than. Do you really want to bring a maternity wardrobe? Or buy one in Berk from itchy wool and wolf pelts?"

"Why do you have to be so reasonable?" Merida asked, stroking his chest.

"You like it. And you know I'm right. Next year, you and the baby can both come."

And so when the Caledonia ships arrived, just Hiccup and Fergus represented the royal family. Hiccup because he alone knew the way and Fergus because Stoick had promised him a dragon.

"Hiccup!" Stoick marched onto the ship before it was fully tied to the dock to give his only child a bone crushing hug.

Toothless gave a \_whoof\_ to remind Stoick he had returned here too. With one last squeeze, the viking chief let his son go to give the dragon a scratch under the chin.

"Where's Merida?" he asked, craning around his son for a look. As if Hiccup's slender build could hide a sapling.

"She's back at the castle. Looking out for a new family member."

"You have a kid?!"

Hiccup laughed. "Not yet. Give it another four months or so."

"That's wonderful!"

Hiccup found himself wrapped up in another hug, complete with his father spinning him around.

Someone cleared their throat behind them. Fergus was standing on the dock, smiling at the pair. "Stoick, I heard something about a dragon?"

"Not tonight! For we will be grandfathers! Come, let's go kill a boar."

#####

Heavy mead consumption meant a slow start the next morning. Hiccup left Toothless sleeping on his old rock bed while he went down to the docks to oversee the negotiations with Berk's traders. Stoick and Fergus were spending the day down near the dragon pens, doing what he had no desire to know, and while Hiccup didn't need to be there for the actual bargaining, he figured it would be good for the Celts to see him doing something.

Before he could reach the ship where Gobber and MacIntosh were arguing, he was flagged down by his friends on the novelty ship. Unlike the other Caledonia vessels carrying mass goods, this ship was filled with trinkets and luxury items, plus goods Celts had made in their free time and were hoping the vikings of Berk would be interested in. It was also the one ship that would not be returning to Caledonia with the rest of the fleet. It would visit other viking clans first to expand trade routes.

"What's this?" Fishlegs asked, holding up a bundle of herbs.

"Mint," Hiccup answered, stepping onto the boat. "They use it for tea and to season meat, but I've also found that it helps Toothless with stomach aches after he eats too much fish."

"Oh, medicinal properties." Fishlegs went back to the small assortments of herbs on board.

The twins were looking at weapons, Snotlout at a new vest made from a fabric not found this far north. Astrid, the only one to not greet him when he came to the harbor, was surprisingly looking at a collection of jewelry.

"Never took you for a necklace girl." Hiccup said, sliding up next to her.

She jumped at his presence and then glared at him. Ah, it hadn't been his imagination or circumstance last night. Astrid had been purposely avoiding him.

"How are you doing?" he asked. "Still trying to get Stormfly to go through the course faster?"

Astrid snapped around to stare at him. "We haven't done any group

flying since you left."

She stormed off the ship. Snotlout came up to him. "She's right you know. It just hasn't been the same without you and Toothless."

Hiccup had been spending the time on Caledonia thinking about how different it was from home. He never suspected that Berk would change from the miserable little island it was. Or that the cause of that change would be him leaving.

"Now be honest," Snotlout said, holding a shirt against his chest. "What do you think of this color?"

"It totally brings out the color in your eyes."

"I'm getting it then. Now that you're married, my chances with Astrid are higher than ever. Did you see what necklace she was looking at?"

"No," Hiccup had been too preoccupied with his friend's mood to notice her shopping.

"You're, well, okay with me going after Astrid right? I mean, you're married now with a kid on the way. Even if you still had feelings for her, they're kinda useless now."

"No, no. Go for it." Hiccup clapped his cousin on the back. Ever since that crash landing on Caledonia, Hiccup had eyes only for Merida. There were no feelings for Astrid. Hadn't been for over two years now.

"Sweet." Snotlout said.

#####

At dinner that night, Hiccup's conversation with Gobber and his dad took on a hint of business.

"We expected some more grain you know Hiccup," Gobber said. "You mentioned more than you brought this trip in the marriage agreement."

Hiccup frowned, looking towards the Celts. His people, though he constantly had to remind himself of that. As much as he had been a black sheep in Berk, he had still been a sheep. Lately on Caledonia, he had been feeling like a goat among sheep though he knew others would label him as a wolf.

"There's been...issues."

"Like what?" Stoick asked.

"One fourth of our grain just disappeared from the stalk while it was growing."

"Rodents." Gobber nodded sagely. "They come and go."

Hiccup nodded and didn't mention anything about how these had to be magic rodents. This was a Caledonia problem, and something he doubted

Stoick and Gobber's viking knowledge could help him with.

#####

They returned to Caledonia in ships heavy with wool and dragon scales, a commodity that was quickly becoming a luxury item they could trade with other kingdoms. There was also nothing like a viking ax.

"How was your trip?" Merida asked with a kiss on Hiccup's cheek. It was obvious why she and Lucky hadn't meet Hiccup and Toothless in the air. Hiccup doubted his wife, now almost seven months pregnant, could climb into the saddle. It didn't mean she was far from Lucky however. The female Nightmare was more protective than usual.

"It was good to go back, see friends and family. But it also made me realize, this is home now. Because you're here. And you too." Hiccup said, crouching down to address Merida's round belly. She laughed and pulled him up for a long kiss.

"Come on, I'm sure Toothless could use a proper scale cleaning." The dragon's ears perked up at the suggestion and he quickly out paced them to the dragon stables.

"I thought Dad was getting a dragon this trip." Merida said as they moved at a more leisurely pace, Lucky walking behind them.

"Oh, he did. It's just that Thunderdrums aren't as fast as Night Furies. Fergus is also having trouble keeping Enbarr from diving under the sea. They're a water type after all."

Merida laughed. "I can't wait to see him fly. And Lucky will be happy to have a new friend. She's missed Toothless these past weeks."

#####

The baby was due in March. It arrived in February instead, on a cold, snowy night. It didn't make a sound.

#####

The funeral for the stillborn child was silent except for the prayers to the gods and the howling of the wind. Merida couldn't tear her eyes from the grave and hadn't made a sound other than sobs for days. Hiccup felt just as awful. He had been looking forward to having a daughter in his arms to sing viking lullabies to and introduce to Toothless. Instead he got a blue son who didn't respond to either of his parents' tears.

Hiccups didn't know if it was a kindness or a cruelty that he and Merida had one night with the dead child. Toothless had made his way through the castle's hallways to join them on the bed, cooing with sympathy. Lucky couldn't fit through the windows, but they had heard her claws on the roof above them.

Complicated on the pain of the funeral, were whispers that Hiccup heard on the way back to the castle from the oak grove.

\_Princess Merida should have married a Celt.\_

\_The Earth Goddess is angry we have a foreign prince.\_

\_He is cursed.\_

\_He has to go.\_

Hiccup's good will with his inventions and trade benefits was gone. He was surprised that no one threw a rock at him during his walk home. He credited his position next to the beloved Princess Merida as well as Toothless's growls.

#####

It was evident early on, when the wheat was only shoulder high, that the problem of the disappearing grain was going to be an issue again. More so, since it was only August. They had lost a fourth of the crop last year. What would it be like this time?

Talk of the Earth Goddess's anger over a viking prince was no longer limited to superstitious farmers. Castle staff were talking about it too and Hiccup began to actually fear for his life. He wasn't the only one. Toothless joined him everywhere and Hiccup was aware of the constant tension in the Night Fury's withers and haunches. Come night, Lucky and Toothless stood guard.

Once, a feeling from Toothless had Hiccup not touch his wine at dinner. It had been poisoned. Merida started cooking for him after that.

When someone hit Hiccup in the arm with an arrow during a morning flight, it had taken all of Hiccups pleading to convince Toothless and Lucky (and Merida who should know better) to return to the castle and not hunt and kill the archer. Fergus took command at breakfast. "Go to Berk. Take Merida with you. I will try to appease the Earth Goddess, she shouldn't be upset about you and Merida. I will do my best to show that to her."

Hiccup didn't know what type of ritual Fergus was going to perform, just that it included the white mare in the paddock. He was tempted to insist on staying just to watch it, but Merida persuaded him otherwise with help from the dragons.

"What if that arrow had pierced your heart? Or Toothless's wing to send you plummeting? You are not safe here Hiccup, and there is no telling if soon the village will blame me as well as you."

It was only after Hiccup ensured he had no plans on staying did Toothless step away from the door.

Merida and Hiccup left by dragonback under the cover of darkness. It was a good thing, because the next morning Elinor found her daughter's mattress filled with throwing daggers.

#####

Days away from Caledonia, Hiccup and Merida finally relaxed. They spent a free day on a sandy island, swimming and watching the dragons play.

"It feels wrong, running away." Hiccup admitted.

"I know." Merida said, laid out in the sand next to him. "But I'd rather have you be a coward than dead."

Hiccup thought of battling the Green Death, and knew he'd rather face a fight. Toothless, sensing his thoughts, decided it was a good time to pounce on his belly and start a wrestling match. Merida laughed at them, Lucky just snorting in confusion. She really was tame for a Nightmare, but she wasn't quite grown yet.

That night, for the first time since the stillborn child, they coupled.

#####

Despite it's unexpected nature, Berk took the visit of the two Caledonian royals in stride. There were boisterous greetings and two nights of feasting. But when it was over Stoick could no longer dismiss his concern for the extra bit of protectiveness Toothless and Lucky showed towards the couple.

"Where is my grandchild?" Stoick asked one morning.

Merida froze and then left silently to spend the day on Lucky's back. Hiccup was forced to explain to his father what had happened.

"We had a son, but he was born dead. Add that to an even worse grain crop this year that last...Dad, Caledonia has a different religion than we do. They believe the land is fruitful only if the king pleases the Earth Goddess. If he doesn't, crops go bad and children aren't born."

"Merida's people blame you." To reinforce his point, Stoick gestured to Hiccup's arm. The wound was mostly healed, but Hiccup hadn't been able to hide the injury from his father.

"Yes. But I haven't done anything wrong, I swear! If anything, I have provided so much for Merida's kingdom with all my inventions. But they think that the fact that I'm a viking is what's upsetting the Goddess."

"Do you believe that?"

Hiccup had to think for a moment. Gods were fickle, who knew what they thought. "I've studied the Celtic lore, and from what I understand I haven't done anything to anger her."

"Then there must be another reason. We just have to find out before you're killed."

The worry of there not being another reason, that it really was Hiccup's heritage and nothing something he could control, was what was hurting Caledonia wouldn't leave his mind. Toothless came over to nudge him, extending his neck for a scratch. The dragon was always doing his best to cheer Hiccup up.

#####

Hiccup had the idea of a trick competition, something to remind them all of good times but dismissed it. He and Toothless were, he hated to admit, a bit out of practice and he suspected based on Astrid's current skills she and Stormfly could give Hiccup and Toothless a run for their money. He felt uneasy at that, very used to his reputation as the best flyer, and didn't want to run the risk of losing it. Besides, as much as he loved Merida, her presence made things different. Was a reminder that things had changed. That feeling would just be more permanent if Hiccup brought back the childhood pastime.

Instead, one lazy afternoon had them and their dragons hanging out in the gully. A space that had seemed large when it was just Hiccup, Toothless, and on occasion Astrid now felt cramped with seven people and six dragons. The Zippleback playing in the spring didn't help matters.

"Tuff! Tell Barf to cut it out!" Astrid said, wringing out her braid.

"Aw, he just wants to play. And with all that water, he can't ignite anything. Nor can Hookfang or Lucky. We should push them in!"

"And how are you going to force two Nightmares into water?"

Tuff shrugged. "We'd figure something out."

"Well, Zipplebacks have lightening breath and that can travel through water so while we might be safe from fire we could still be - "

Fishlegs was cut off by a punch from Ruffnutt.

"You're a spoil sport."

Merida laughed, amused by the vikings and as always the sound made Hiccup smile. He gave her a peck on the cheek, missing Astrid's glare.

"So, Merida," Snotlout began, tiptoeing his fingers towards Astrid. "Got any dragons in Caledonia?"

"Aside from ours? No."

"There's a few old stories though," Hiccup said, ignoring his wife's fond eye roll. He always paid more attention to local lore and history than she did. "They're all about water dragons though, and most of them have multiple heads. At least five."

"Like Zipplebacks?" Tuffnut asked. "Man, a dragon with two heads is hard to drive, I can't imagine more. You'd need double sets of twins or something to fly it!"

"Yeah well â€" Toothless, don't even think about it!"

The group all turned to look at the black dragon who had paused getting out of the water, face innocent and confused.

"Empty your mouth."

With the grumble the dragon did as commanded, spilling gallons of water on the ground, a few fish included.

"Man, you weren't even looking at him!" Fishlegs said, obviously impressed. "What was he going to do?"

"Spit it at me."

Astrid snorted. "Shoulda done it anyway Toothless!"

As if on cue, a stream of water came at them. Hiccup ducked, bringing Merida down with him, and it hit Snotlout in the face instead. He turned around to chastise Lucky, she and Toothless had planned a double attack, but was cut off by his cousin's scream. "It's boiling water!"

The stout viking ran and put his face into the water, the others laughing. Hiccup wouldn't be surprised if Nightmares did spit warm water, but since the attack had been met for Merida and Lucky would never hurt her rider, it wouldn't be boiling.

"You and Toothless are even more in sync now." Astrid pointed out.

Hiccup shrugged. "You guys all know I've understood dragons better than people."

Merida squeezed his hand, very aware of that too. If he understood people better, maybe things in Caledonia wouldn't be so bad. As it was, he had always felt more comfortable with Toothless and Lucky. Enbarr too now, and the animals in the stable than the staff or villagers. It bothered him, because not only did it mean he couldn't fully connect with or understand the people he was going to rule someday it had made life dangerous.

Fishlegs returned to the idea of Caledonia dragons. "Maybe you and Merida will find a new species! Even the Book of Dragons doesn't mention any species outside of places where the different viking clans live. There could be a hundred species waiting to be discovered. Maybe when you go back, we could go with you to try to find some!"

"Maybe next time Fishlegs," Merida apologized. "Things will be crazy with the harvest."

Hiccup knew that she was protecting him. One viking in Caledonia was enough at the moment.

#####

Fishleg's idea of undiscovered dragon species stayed in Hiccup's head as they flew home.

"What if it's a dragon eating the wheat?"

"Wouldn't Toothless and Lucky know if there was another dragon about?"

"Not necessarily. They really only know the scents of dragons they shared a nest with. We've had unknown dragons in the area of Berk before and they didn't know until they saw them. I don't know about other species, but I'm pretty sure Toothless can't smell very well."



He doesn't know there's an eel in the basket until he puts his snout in it."

"Say it is a dragon, then what? Will you fight it?"

"No...talk to it maybe. Ask why it's taking our grain, and why now."

"And if it isn't a dragon?"

"I might have to cheat on you with a horse."

#####

Hiccup knew it was stupid, sneaking out of the room on Toothless's back. Even if they managed to get around Lucky who was on the roof, Merida caught the tip of Toothless's one tailfluke before they jumped out the window.

"Where are you going? And bareback at that!" she hissed. "You'd never get airborne!"

"Well, we were going to fall to the stable, saddle up, and then get into the air."

"And after that?"

"I want to check one of the fields."

"You are crazy."

"Yes. Which is why you love me."

With a grumble, she climbed onto the window sill. "Since I can fly bareback, Lucky and I will play lookout while you get your gear."

Hiccup leaned down to give her a kiss, but she knocked him away. "Don't make me regret this, Hiccup Haddock Horrendous the Third. This time of night, who knows what's out there."

"Bear princesses?"

"And farmers willing to shoot first and ask questions later when protecting their crops."

"Love you too!" he whisper shouted as Toothless jumped.

#####

"You're gonna spend the night in the middle of the field, without me, Lucky, or Toothless?!" Merida's fingers twitched on the bow in her hand.

"Yes?" Hiccup's assurance of this plan was fading in the face of his wife. "Look, I have a net. And if it is a dragon I can capture it-"

"What if it's the size of the Green Death?!"

"Then there would have been footprints. Since they aren't anyway, it's got to be something that's eating the grain while in the air, and tiny enough to not break the stalks as it flies by. The net's big enough for--"

"What if one of the farmers finds you? They are not going to think you're there for a good reason!"

"Toothless is volunteering to throw a fireball at them. Thanks for that Buddy, but I'd be fine with a silent pickup. Plus, didn't you come along to play lookout Merida?"

"I thought you had a good plan!"

"Plans, like inventions, are hit and miss." Most of his inventions failed until about the tenth version. His plans, while having a habit of going sideways, did usually work out. He really hoped this one did.

Toothless landed in the woods at the edge of a wheat field. Hiccup had noticed a pattern to the fields destroyed, and if it stayed true this would be the next spot hit. He didn't know if it would be tonight, but it was worth the try.

"Stay here Toothless, don't let anything sneak by you, okay?"

The dragon snorted. Of course he would look out for Hiccup. Had the last few years meant nothing?

Hiccup smiled at his dragon and then slipped into the rows of wheat. In the midst of the field, he found a place to sit down and wait. He looked up, hoping to see the gleam of red moonlight off of Lucky's scales, but it wasn't there. Lucky had a larger wingspan than Toothless, and thus in order to stay aloft had to make bigger circles or be higher up. However, Hiccup was sure she was nearby.

Now that he was in the middle of the field, Hiccup had to admit he didn't know what to do. He had figured he'd find a spot and the dragon would come to him. Waiting, or what to do while he was waiting, escaped him.

Think, think! What had drawn Toothless to him, way back then?

His stillness, his surrendering of power to the dragon, his willingness to understand. Essentially, Hiccup had been open to communicating with Toothless, even back then when he had held the dagger over the Night Fury's heart. Why else had he looked Toothless in the eyes when he could have just stared at where he was planning to stab?

Taking a deep breath, Hiccup closed his eyes. He placed his hands on the ground, feeling the earth beneath him. It was soft, wet. When he stood up, his knees and shins would be stained, and if he stayed out here all night the water would seep into his clothes and make him ill. But it had the possibility to be worth it.

In. Out. He stretched out his mind, trying to get the small dragon he suspected was out there to come and greet him. He wasn't scary, didn't want to hurt him. Hiccup just wanted to talk, but he wasn't

going to force the issue. The dragon would have to make the first move.

In. Out. Hiccup let his mind drift. The wind was soft tonight, which meant more of an issue for Lucky. He could feel her straining, Merida keeping her as close to the ground as possible without risking a stall. Toothless was crouched in the woods, directly across from him, staring with wide green eyes. And there was something, something golden...

On instinct, Hiccup put out his mud covered hand. There was a weight that settled on his fingertip. It was light, no more than a dollop of cream. Hesitantly, Hiccup opened his eyes.

It was a golden dragon. Only one head, but it had two sets of wings like a dragonfly. It was also incredibly tiny, maybe half the length of his finger, and had no legs. It was essentially a flying snake.

When it noticed Hiccup's eyes, it gave a squeak like a mouse and prepared to take off again. Quickly, he shut them.

"I'm not gonna hurt you. Promise."

The golden dragon spent a second on his finger tip, wings flapping silently but Hiccup could feel the breeze on his hand. Then it stopped and seemed committed to staying for a conversation by wrapping around Hiccup's index finger.

"What are you doing with all the wheat you collect? No way you could eat it all yourself."

He got the image of a large pile of individual wheat grains, the shell still attached.

"Storing them? But you took a whole bunch last year. Why take more?"

The same pile, this time rotted with a few sprigs of green poking through. The grain had gone bad before the dragon could eat it, so it had to gather more. And it wasn't just this one. It was a flock, one that had grown in the year. What started as ten dragons was now thirty six.

"Even with that many of you, there is no way you could eat half our wheat. As a country, we don't even eat that much in a year and we're much bigger. Why are you doing this now? Why not ten years ago? Or ten years later?"

The next image was pale, as if the colors were sun bleached and Hiccup somehow understood that he was getting them second hand. These were images the little dragon had received from someone else, someone powerful who was trying to get a message out. The images showed dry rivers and cloudless skies, stilted crops and thin cows.

"A drought. There's a drought coming. When?"

The dragon didn't know, but it knew it was soon. It hadn't effected the last harvest, or this one. Maybe the next, or the one beyond that. But it would be soon. Before-

Hiccup was hit with another sun-bleached image, but the colors were brighter. He wasn't getting it second hand. Whoever gave the small dragon that first prediction was now giving them directly to Hiccup. It hurt. He had to brace himself with his empty hand and could feel Toothless running towards him, not minding the wheat stalks.

"Toothless, stop."

Even with his eyes closed, Hiccup knew the dragon was just a few feet away. He was worried for Hiccup, and then a sound drew his attention. The Night Fury went into guard mode, just as Hiccup got an image from Lucky of motion in the wheat.

Trusting his dragon to deal with the treat, Hiccup replayed the images in his mind. The effects of drought, and then an image of Merida with child again. Spring, with healthy crops. Merida would be pregnant during the drought, but would deliver the child in the spring. A spring that promised to be plentiful.

"I get that, severe drought, and a boom. But when?" He got the feeling he was talking to a god and hoped it didn't mind the less than worshipful behavior Hiccup was displaying.

His head exploded with pain again as the new images came. No, they same image, but flashed 12 times.

"Next year?"

\_Yes\_ the wind sighed.

\_Run!\_ The command came from all three dragons at once. It forced Hiccup's eyes open, but when he tried to stand he found he couldn't. He was still reeling from the pain of the images the god gave him, and he had been sitting on the cold, wet ground long enough for his muscles to freeze up.

"I can't!" he cried and then Toothless was there, supporting him and trying to help him on his back and a dozen more golden dragons were around them, an honor guard, teeth bared and facing off with...with a farmer, notched bow in hand.

Except he was aiming it not Hiccup, but the ground, and staring at the prince in awe.

"You...you talk to dragons."

Always, but hearing their voice in his head had been a new one.

"You...you just had a vision."

Yes, and he was still feeling the after effects in a throbbing headache.

"You...you're a druid!"

Hiccup didn't want to argue with him. He didn't want to do anything but climb into bed. With a final shove with his nose and help from

the golden dragons, Toothless had Hiccup in the saddle. On autopilot, the prince slid his feet into the stirrups and followed the Night Fury's cues.

Merida and Lucky caught up to them and made sure they got back to the castle safely.

#####

Hiccup woke up feeling much better. That was, until he realized he was a pillow for thirty six finger dragons and freaked out. He flailed out of bed, only to crash into Toothless who greeted him with a long tongue lick.

"Thanks Buddy. I love a slobber bath in the morning."

After washing up as well as he could with the pitcher and pail, he'd have to have Maudie prepare a proper bath later, he went down to breakfast. The rest of the family was already there. As soon as Hiccup walked into the hall, the triplets barreled out of their chairs.

"Why didn't you tell us you were a druid?"

"Can you talk to all animals or just dragons?"

"Can you shape-shift?"

"Tell us the future again!"

"What do they sound like?"

"Boys!" Elinor's shout had them backing down, but they still buzzed around Hiccup as he made his way to the table. Upon closer examinations, he noted each of them had a finger dragon in his hair. "Hiccup's had an interesting night. At least let him eat breakfast before you question him. I did not raise bear cubs!"

"Almost did," Fergus offered and his wife playfully smacked him.

Hiccup smiled at Merida as he took his spot across the table from her. "I have the feeling I missed something."

"That you did. That farmer, Hiccup, he watched you in the fields. He said you talked to the dragons, a proper conversation but he could only hear half of it."

"So that did happen."

"And, that you foretold a drought."

His fork paused halfway to his mouth and then returned to the plate. "I did. It was really weird, those images, and it hurt getting them." He rubbed his forehead as he continued. "I think it might have been the Earth Goddess who sent them to me. There's a drought coming, next year in fact. Those little guys," he gestured to the dragons hiding the the triplets' hair, "Sensed it and were storing food. Not that they can eat everything they gathered. They just felt the need to hoard food."

"He's calling you a druid."

"Is that even possible? They're supposed to have a huge connection with the land, and I'm not of Caledonia. I could just be able to talk to dragons."

Elinor shook her head. "The gift of tongues is only gifted to druids. It's different than having a way with animals. It's possible this is simply you coming into your powers as a druid."

"But really, a viking druid?"

"Is it anymore absurd than a queen turned into a bear? Or the idea that dragons are not the blood thirsty creatures that we all thought they were five years ago?"

"Um...yes?"

"Get used to it Hiccup." Merida said. "You're a special man, I wouldn't put anything past you."

"On the good side," Fergus cut in, "this farmer has been spreading the idea that you're a druid through the village. I don't think you have to worry about arrows in your arm any more."

"A druid king," Elinor cut in, "hasn't ruled in longer than even the stories can fully say. But the kingdom he led was large and prosperous."

"Now, everyone is going to be happy I married a viking. We better tell your friends to look out when the visit. I can see many a Celtic maiden thinking you're all druids and whisking them away."

"Ruffnut would be so happy."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>AN:\*\* Fergus's Thunderdrum is named Enbharr. It means 'splendid mane' or 'water-foam', and was originally the name of a horse whose mane was said to be the froth of waves. According to Irish lore, Endbarr was the horse of the oceanic divinity Manannan mac Lir. Manannan was considered to be a strong shape shifter and lived on an ocean island with ties to Avalon.

Hiccup's line about sleeping with a horse is reference to the ritual in some areas of Celtic kings, well, mating with a white mare as part of a coronation ceremony. Gods and Goddesses in Celtic cultures are considered shape-shifters, and white mares were connected with Earth Goddesses. In some cases, Celtic kings believed that in being with the mare, they were being with the Goddess herself.

Toyed with the idea of dragons being Celtic gods, but they've only ever been villains in Celtic stories and even then didn't originate from the Celts (the tales came from the Vikings ^\_~). Many scholars believe that the tales of heroes and saints fighting dragons/worm/serpents are allegories of Christianity destroying the pagan culture.

End  
file.